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MAA TOWN HALL MEETING

WCAAP has as a goal access to health care for all children.

Background

- Recent removal of immigrant population from roles of Medicaid

 - About 3000 children affected in Yakima County

History of successes

- Legislature expanded number of covered children over the last decade

- Improved immunization rates in last decade in spite of initiative limits on public health budgets.

- Decrease in hospitalization of Medicaid covered children in the years 1992-1998.

Criticisms of waiver

- Drug copay is reasonable, why not do it for all patients? Savings will occur when patients and docs see beyond direct to consumer advertising and drug company representatives pushing drugs onto doctors.

Enrollment caps

- Will create a group of poor families who have no access to preventive services, early identification of problems and timely treatment.

 - This will cost the system and the public more in the long run.

- These patients will be forced to use the ER for "outpatient" illness

- Interruption in care is care is equivalent to no care.

ER co-payments

- Hospitals will absorb copay, there is no way to mandate payment; ER's cannot turn away patients due to federal laws in addition to ethical and liability considerations.

- A better solution is to compensate primary care sufficiently to enable medical homes for all children. This has been shown to reduce hospitalizations as one positive outcome.

- No definition of "primary care" in the current waiver proposal. No one will afford to argue the definition given a \$10 reimbursement.

 - Hospitals will write it off and patients will know it.

Premiums

- This population will choose to be uninsured rather than pay premiums.

- A working family of 4 cannot afford \$1000 per year for insurance premiums when making an income of \$18,000 (5% if over FPL)

Scenarios

- Children who get behind on immunizations will have difficulty catching up. There is no alternative to primary care doctor or community clinic to administer immunizations. no public health clinics to do so

Newborn who has no coverage will go home without care, high ER utilization for counseling, etc

Preventive services are cost saving services. Children represent a small fraction of the total MAA expenditures and an even smaller portion of the projected inflation in the MAA budget. The increases in access that have been implemented by the state legislature in the last decade and the improvements in health that are measurable are in jeopardy. The waiver will result in larger numbers of children without access to primary care that will result in higher ER usage and increased overall cost of health care. It is unwise to reduce access to health care for children. It is unfair to try to balance the health care budget on their backs.